

ORACLE CHARTER SCHOOL
888 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Thursday September 1, 2016

The following individuals were present: Trustees - Joseph Costantini, Peggy Moriarty, Ramone Alexander, Ron Stewart, Jacqueline Hollins, Tom Bailey, Susan Hakala; Administration - Dara Seeley, Chantele Thompson, Ellen Connell, and Amanda Kenefick. Legal - Steve Polowitz. James McLeod, Robert Spampata, Maureen Ludwig, Vivian Logan, and Divitta Alexander - Trustees, were not present.

Board Chairman Joe Costantini called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

MINUTES: Upon motion by Peggy Moriarty, seconded by Jacqueline Hollins, the draft minutes from the August 4, 2016 meeting were approved.

PRESENTATIONS:

Mr. Costantini planned to introduce Rebekah Moraites, Association President. However, as she was attending the first session of a night course, she was unable to attend. She will be invited to attend a future Board meeting. Mr. Costantini noted that Ms. Moraites, Mr. Ashwood, and Mr. Polowitz were to be commended for their hard work leading to the execution of the new CBA on August 8, 2016.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Ms. Dara Seeley, new Director of Curriculum and Instruction, provided an instructional update with some changes from the previous Board meeting, as well as more detail on professional development initiatives. Noting that the CSI report of June 2016 stimulated some changes in the structure of the curriculum, it is expected that everyone teaching in the school will have the same expectations and that use of syllabi, scope and sequence, unit plans and lesson plans housed in the eDoctrina tool will ensure consistent data and alignment. A 5-week marking period, with norming and scoring concentration in social studies, math, and science to spread the assessment methodology already used by the English Department, will spur professional development discussions. In addition, there will be increased academic rigor and opportunity for students to climb to the AP level in English and Government. CLEP classes will be offered in Psychology, English 12, English 11, and U.S. History. Additional electives such as Memoir I and II, will be added, and classes like Algebra will have an added lab every other day to deepen academic exploration and skills acquisition. In the area of professional development, focus will be on teaching teachers how to look at data to improve instruction. Teachers new to the school had a crash course in how to use Thinking Maps, a professional development tool continuing from the 2015-16 school year. The full staff and Board will read Between the World and Me by Ta'Neheisi Coates as a seed text impacting all subjects and literacy

efforts across the curriculum. This will also serve as a springboard for cultural conversations among the staff and Board.

Ms. Ellen Connell, Interim Director of Student Life, provided a comprehensive handout with the names of Oracle Charter School's Student Support Team (SST), as well as her team's main goals for the first 10 weeks of school and the cultural initiatives she is leading for the 2016-17 school year, focused on recognizing students for positive behaviors and achievements. Ms. Connell and the SST will eliminate In-School Suspensions, which she noted were not successful and did not have a positive impact. The Redirection Room will be used to reduce the number of classroom removals and discipline referrals. She outlined school-wide positive behavior recognition, such as the RISE Up program and the HERO student behavior software. The entire student population will be required to submit their cellphones at the start of the day to minimize off-task behavior and to ensure that the classroom is an environment conducive to learning. With a lot of new staff at OCS, Board members asked about professional development for classroom management. Finally, Mr. Costantini asked that the Culture Council at OCS provide a presentation on their members, focus, and initiatives at a future Board meeting. There was some discussion about diversity among teaching staff and difficulties in recruiting a diverse cross-section of teachers.

Ms. Chantele Thompson, Director of Community Relations/Outreach, provided a thorough update on Community Outreach projects and OCS Community Relations policy. She provided a 12-point outline of what her position should accomplish in the fields of promoting public interest, fostering communication, increasing participation, reinforcing OCS core values, and developing programs to meet the needs of students. In that vein, she noted that brochures and school communications will be examined to ensure that the "voice" of OCS is a consistent message. Ms. Thompson has developed a strategic plan for social media with tangible goals to ensure return on investment for consultants hired and to effectively engage the student population and their families with an intense media presence. A new social media specialist will be hired, and an OCS website overhaul is needed. Ms. Thompson provided a copy of a survey that will go out to OCS parents in order to obtain insight into barriers to parental engagement and student success. Ms. Thompson would like to offer a significant (such as a gift card to a local store) incentive for parents to complete the survey. Ms. Thompson outlined upcoming opportunities for students to participate in meaningful activities, such as Delta Sigma Theta's empowerment workshops for African American male students. OCS will participate in the International Day of the Girl at the Science Museum. The 2016-17 Law and Government Career Program kicks off on September 20. Barbara Payne is the student advisor this year. The 2nd weekend in November is being proposed for a college visitation trip to the Washington, D.C. area. The OCS students will also be getting involved in the African Heritage Food CoOp. Through the Buffalo Urban League and Young Professionals organizations, OCS students will host a voter registration rally to foster civic engagement, and opportunities are being sought for students to engage with police officers from their neighborhoods. Finally, there was some discussion about ELL student recruitment, touching on demonstration good faith efforts to recruit and advertise that go along with the renewal process for charter schools and possible ways to get the word out in refu-

gee and other communities. Amanda Kenefick noted that the school has created a master calendar of events that will be on the school website. In addition, she will make the calendar available through Google calendar. Ms. Thompson noted that the first PTSO meeting will be held on September 13, 2016, and the goal is to regularly schedule the meetings at 5 P.M. prior to the monthly Board of Trustees meetings.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Polowitz advised the Board that the CBA has been completed and signed by both parties pursuant to the previous Board resolution. There were some changes made to clean up the CBA (eliminating outdated references to prior years, typographic errors, grammatical adjustments); however, none of those changes were substantive in nature. Therefore, Tom Bailey proposed a motion to ratify the signing of the CBA. Peggy Moriarty seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Academic Excellence (Academic Policies) - Jacqueline Hollins, Chair:

Ms. Hollins noted that the last meeting was held on August 9, 2016 to discuss lines of communication, arts integration in the curriculum, professional development of teachers in the area of cultural competency, the issue of teacher turnover and reasons for departures, and ways of reporting to the Board at meetings regarding student achievement and accountability in a way that was responsive to the changes in instructional expectations, student life and discipline with new school leadership.

B. Development/Marketing - Peggy Moriarty, Chair:

Ms. Moriarty noted that a new school year kickoff meeting was held on August 29 to brainstorm the year's goals and avenues to reach the goals. Vivian Logan is working on a grant application to fund the proposed new school social worker position. In addition, Ms. Logan is assembling a file of relevant materials that will be accessible and "ready to go" when opportunities arise to seek funds for OCS. Regular meetings of this committee will be held at 5 P.M. on the same day as the Finance Committee meetings.

C. Finance Committee - Robert Spampata, Chair:

No report; Mr. Spampata was not present. The Vendor List was passed out to the Board members present and will be made available again at the next Board meeting in October to any Board members not present. Each Board member is to review the list to rule out any potential conflict of interest. On a technical note, Mr. Polowitz noted that there should be no blank spots in the spreadsheet with respect to vendors' purposes. The list will be reviewed and updated.

D. Governance - Tom Bailey, Chair:

Mr. Bailey noted that ongoing discussions centered on planning for a Retreat for the Board. The date will be October 29, 2016. The Board informally provided Mr. Bailey with a vote of confidence to move forward to engage Kenneth W. Peterson to facilitate the discussions at the Retreat, which could include protocols such as on-boarding new teachers, succession planning for the Board, how to effectively distribute key information, and planning for renewal. In addition, Mr. Bailey made the case for the Board to consider hiring a person to transcribe the meeting minutes, keep accurate records of

who is on the Board, keep on top of regulatory requirements and the calendar, help the Board communicate effectively, and to assemble information on OCS that will be easily accessible. Mr. Bailey will make a proposal for the above and circulate his ideas at the Retreat.

E. Executive Committee: The next meeting will be held on Monday, October 3 at 9 A.M.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

The next Board meeting of the Oracle Charter School will be held Thursday, October 6 at 6 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan R. Hakala
Secretary to the Board of Trustees

DRAFT